

FAMILY REUNION

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.—Kurt Vonnegut

As a surprise for evening entertainment
during our family summer vacation,
my mother transferred all of the 8mm film
she had been storing in a shopping bag
to DVD without organizing the unmarked reels
in chronological order. We (my parents, my sister,
my husband and two boys) watch.
On the screen, I'm coming home
from the hospital, my mother's effusive smile,
my father's nervous one both directed
at their first born, their naïve hope radiant,
then I am heading a soccer ball,
swimming butterfly, dancing *en pointe*.
Then it's my parents' honeymoon,
Niagara Falls in its raging cliché,
followed by my mother's college graduation
before the camera cuts to a wedding (whose?)
shooting close-ups of semi-familiar faces
who died years before I was born.
They wave and smile and toast the happy couple
and then it's my first day of kindergarten
waiting for the school bus by the big rock.
I'm wearing a red plaid pinafore
which blurs into a crowded kitchen,
Passover. I am two and entertaining
the crowd while my grandmother scurries
to the table with hot soup. My grandfather,
three months away from a fatal heart attack,
dances with me thirty-five years later on that screen
in the vacation home in northern Michigan
as my mother realizes that that day
was the last time she saw him alive.
My mother, the one who is next to me on the couch,
squeezes my foot, hard, and gasps.

Melissa Lynn Pomerantz